

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

Objections:

The abstract is objected to because of the phrase (in line 1): "The present invention relates to". Applicant has deleted this phrase.

Claims 1 and 27 are objected to because of alleged informalities. Applicant has amended claim 1 as suggested by the examiner. Applicant has amended claim 27 by deleting "outer diameter" and substituting therefore, "inner diameter". The examiner states that "major diameter", in line 4 of claim 27, should be "minor diameter". However, a female member inner diameter (26) is defined by the female thread major diameter (22), as shown, for example, in Fig. 6 and discussed in the corresponding text on page 5, lines 27-29 ("In the embodiments illustrated in the figures, female thread major diameter 22 corresponds with a female member inner diameter 26.") of the specification. Applicant therefore submits that the original recitation regarding the major diameter is proper, and is consistent with the disclosure in the specification and drawings.

Based on the foregoing, reconsideration and withdrawal of the objections of record are respectfully requested.

Rejections:

35 U.S.C. § 112

Claim 13 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph, as allegedly being indefinite. Applicant has amended claim 13 by changing its dependency from claim 12 to claim 8. Applicant submits that amended claim 13 complies with the second paragraph of section 112 and requests confirmation of the same.

35 U.S.C. § 102

Claim 30 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as allegedly being anticipated by Colgate (U.S. Pat. No. 5,188,402). For clarification purposes, claim 30 has been amended by adding the following language with reference to the differential in magnitude of the space between the male member and female member at positions proximate the female member open end and the female member closed end – “in the absence of the layer of elastically deformable material”. See, for example, Fig. 15 of the instant specification.

Colgate fails to disclose the coupling as recited in amended claim 30. Referring to Fig. 2A of Colgate, the magnitude of the space between the male member and the female member is, in absence of gasket 10, equivalent at positions proximate the female member's open and closed ends (as interpreted by the examiner). Colgate teaches gasket 10 itself having a varying wall thickness (see col. 4, lines 34-64 for example); however, the amount of space between the male member and the female member is constant along their respective lengths. Thus, Colgate not only fails to disclose all of the coupling features recited in claim 30, but also teaches away from at least some of such features.

Based on the foregoing, Applicant respectfully request reconsideration and withdrawal of the section 102 rejection.

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PATENT

Allowable Subject Matter:

The office action indicates that original claims 19-16 and 28-29 are allowed, claims 1-18 and 27 would be allowable if rewritten to overcome the noted objections, and that claim 13 would be allowable if rewritten to overcome the section 112 rejection. Claims 1, 13 and 27 have been amended to overcome these objections and rejections of record. Furthermore, claim 30 has been amended to clarify its distinguishing features from the Colgate reference. Accordingly, claims 1-31 are now in condition for allowance.

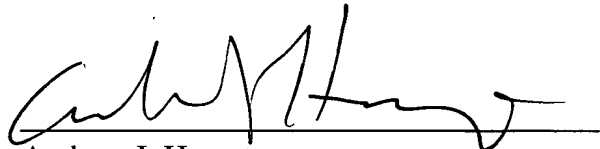
Drawings:

Applicant requests an indication of whether the drawings filed on January 31, 2002 are accepted.

Conclusion:

The foregoing represents a complete response to the office action. Early and favorable consideration is earnestly solicited.

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